

## The Role of Accounting and Auditing in Anti-Corruption Strategies: The Case of ECOWAS

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**Abstract :** Given the current scale of corruption epidemic in West African economies, governments are seeking for immediate and effective measures to reduce the likelihood of the plague within the region. Generally, accountants and auditors are expected to help organizations in detecting illegal practices. However, their role in the fight against corruption is sometimes limited due to the collusive nature of corruption. The Denmark anti-corruption model shows that the implementation of additional controls over public accounts and independent efficient audits improve transparency and increase the probability of detection. This study is aimed at reviewing the existing anti-corruption policies of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) as to observe the role attributed to accounting, auditing and other managerial practices in their anti-corruption drive. It further discusses the usefulness of accounting and auditing in helping anti-corruption commissions in controlling misconduct and increasing the perception to detect irregularities within public administration. The purpose of this initiative is to identify and assess the relevance of accounting and auditing in curbing corruption. To meet this purpose, the study was designed to answer the questions of whether accounting and auditing processes were included in the reviewed anti-corruption strategies, and if yes, whether they were effective in the detection process. A descriptive research method was adopted in examining the role of accounting and auditing in West African anti-corruption strategies. The analysis reveals that proper recognition of accounting standards and implementation of financial audits are viewed as strategic mechanisms in tackling corruption. Additionally, codes of conduct, whistle-blowing and information disclosure to the public are among the most common managerial practices used throughout anti-corruption policies to effectively and efficiently address the problem. These observations imply that sound anti-corruption strategies cannot ignore the values of including accounting and auditing processes. On one hand, this suggests that governments should employ all resources possible to improve accounting and auditing practices in the management of public sector organizations. On the other hand, governments must ensure that accounting and auditing practices are not limited to the private sector, but when properly implemented constitute crucial mechanisms to control and reduce corrupt incentives in public sector.

**Keywords :** accounting, anti-corruption strategy, auditing, ECOWAS

**Conference Title :** ICAF 2015 : International Conference on Accounting and Finance

**Conference Location :** Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Conference Dates :** May 14-15, 2015